(b) The average time taken to issue a fresh passport is 6-7 weeks and two weeks for renewal of passport.

(c) One of the major steps taken to help people outside Bangalore to get passports is the Decentralisation Scheme under which passport applications are received at district level in District Passport Cells (DPCs) in all districts of Karnataka other than Bangalore with effect from 2 November, 2003. In addition, passport applications are also received at 28 Speed Post Centres in Karnataka. Further two Passport Application Collection centres are functioning at Gulbarga and Mangalore. Passport Camps and Adalats were conducted at various District Headquarters during the period to expedite the issuance of passports to people outside Bangalore.

Splitting of IOC

*143. SHRI DIPANKAR MUKHERJEE: Will the Minister of DISINVESTMENT be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have decided to consider splitting of Indian Oil Corporation and selling its marketing arm; and

(b) if so, the reason therefore in view of (i) Government's earlier decision of keeping IOC as a flagship company under Public Sector, and (ii) unviability of stand-alone refineries?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (SHRI SU. THIRUNAVUKKARASAR): (a) and (b) Government has before it different options to address the situation arising out of the judgment of the Supreme Court dated 16.9.2003 regarding HPCL and BPCL disinvestment.

Second phase of the NHDP

*150. DR. T. SUBBARAMI REDDY:
SHRI MOOLCHAND MEENA:

Will the Minister of ROAD TRANSPORT AND HIGHWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have approved the second phase of the